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ABSTRACT

In May of 1969, the Broward County Board of Public Instruction (Migrant Education Center) made available this guide to enable teachers to increase listening abilities of elementary school students. Although research studies show that listening can and should be taught, it is pointed out that listening instruction for most children is an incidental affair. Therefore, this document explores the need for listening instruction and notes that schools are reluctant to teach listening due to the problems in measuring and evaluating listening. The author discusses (1) the listening environment, (2) stages in listening development, (3) when to teach listening, and (4) how to teach listening skills. Ideas, activities, and exercises in listening are presented to offer teachers many types of experiences in listening which can be a part of a regular class schedule, group projects, and units of work. Questions are provided to guide the teacher in evaluating the listening growth of students. A bibliography is included. (AN)

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INCREASING LISTENING ABILITIES OF CHILDREN: A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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RATIONALE

The mistaken belief that children grow in listening by merely growing up is one which is gradually changing. Research studies show that listening can and should be taught. Unfortunately, listening instruction for most children is an incidental affair. Quite often, a student is admonished to "pay attention" or "listen carefully". Consequently too many children are hearing but are not really listening.

Time and time again it has been proven that listening cannot be considered as an area which is naturally developed. With the bombardment of radio, television, tapes, and records, interests and emphasis has shifted from reading back to listening to a considerable extent. We are suddenly realizing, however, that more and more of our students are unable to evaluate what they listen to as we had assumed.

Traditionally, administrators and school boards tend to want to be able to measure and evaluate the areas which are a part of our school programs. Since listening is an area which tends to be difficult to measure and evaluate concretely, some school systems frown upon it as an acceptable part in today's curriculum. One of the difficulties has been the lack of instrument to adequately measure and evaluate listening. A pioneer effort in this field was the standardized BROWN-CARLSEN LISTENING COMPREHENSION TEST. This test, which is used at the high school level, contains sub-tests labelled as measures of (1) immediate recall, (2) following directions, (3) recognizing transitions, (4) recognizing word meanings, and (5) lecture comprehension. The other well-known attempt to measure listening skills is the S T E P Listening Test part of a battery of achievement tests which is available in different forms for different grade levels. Criticisms of the test include the fact that it is a mixture of reading and listening.

A second major factor which has caused teachers to neglect listening is the over-crowded school curriculum. Many teachers feel that there is no time

to add another subject. In fact, in spite of the importance of listening, apparently no authority advocates the addition of listening as another course to the elementary curriculum.

The language arts areas are constantly used media which can be enlarged and/or refined on the pupil's level through experiences in using them. Listening, as do other language arts areas, need a content in which to operate effectively. Although there are understandings to be developed and procedures to be learned in listening, it is not a subject per se. Just as a pupil does not read reading, or write writing, he does not listen listening. When a pupil reads, writes, or listens, he must read, write or listen about something. Teachers need to assume the responsibility for providing methods which will increase listening skills. As a result, students will not only learn by listening but listen to learn.

THE LISTENING ENVIRONMENT

Most teachers realize that there is an art to teaching listening just as there is to teaching another subject area. The general climate of the room, the arrangement of tables and/or chairs, the appropriatness of the material, the interest of the listener, and the skill of the teacher are all very important factors in the listening environment.

Blake (3) listed a code for teachers of listening.

As a Teacher of Listening I Shall:

1. be a good listener myself
2. use a classroom voice (relaxed, unhurried, non-threatening, varied tones) and facial expression (sincere, expressive, varied) that promote accurate listening.
3. initiate activities with interest levels of the students in mind; e.g. make things so interesting children will want to listen.
4. get everyone's attention before speaking
5. teach children that directions, instructions, and other types of information-giving will be stated only once
6. encourage my students to listen to each others' contributions; e.g., do not repeat a statement, answer or remark a child gives.
7. ask many questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" or other short answers
8. take time to listen to my students before and after school as well as during the school day
9. teach listening all day long in connection with other subject areas
10. create an emotional and physical climate conducive to good listening
11. establish with my students the purpose for which they should listen to each activity

12. be well-prepared for the material to be taught or the activities to be directed
13. vary my classroom program to provide a variety of listening experiences; e.g., tape recorder, records, sound films and filmstrips, language master, discussions, debates, individual and group reports, dramatic activities, demonstrations, group work, poetry, music, descriptions, etc.
14. teach my students the importance and value of being a good listener
15. realize that students as a rule, spend more time listening than in any other communication skill
16. be aware of the seating arrangement in each listening activity; e.g., have students with a listening disability sit near to me
17. help my children to set up standards for effective listening
18. teach my students to develop an awareness and appreciation of sounds
19. build a program in which listening skills are consistently taught and practiced; e.g., interpreting unknown words through context; noting details; following directions; finding main and subordinate ideas; detecting clues that show the speaker's trend of thought; evaluating an expressed point of view in relation to facts, propaganda, and previous learnings; making valid inferences
20. teach my students to form desirable listening habits; e.g., self discipline (disregarding of distractions and mannerisms of speaker); mental curiosity (asking questions about what has been heard); critical analysis (truth, logic sequence); listening for different purposes (appreciative, analytical, informative, recreational, responsive, marginal); courtesy to the speaker;

non-emotionalism (find something interesting in the subject and the speaker, withhold opinion until speaker has finished); notetaking; using the differential between thought speed and speaking speed.

STAGES IN LISTENING DEVELOPMENT

There are various stages or levels of listening. Many students will be discovered who represent each of these stages. Dechant (7) has listed these stages as follows:

1. Little conscious listening except as the student is directly and personally concerned with what is being presented
2. Easily distracted by people and things in the environment
3. Half listening while holding fast to own ideas and waiting to insert them at the first opportunity
4. Listening passively with apparent absorption but little or no reaction
5. Listening, forming associations, and responding with items from his own experience rather than reacting to what is presented
6. Listening and expressing some reaction through questions or comments
7. Listening with evidence of genuine mental and emotional participation
8. Listening with a real meeting of minds

WHEN TO TEACH LISTENING

Good listening habits can be developed through normal situations that may arise during a regular school day. The following situations present varied opportunities for the teacher to give direction and encourage the development of listening ability:

Dictation

Poetry

Choral reading

Class discussions

Oral book reports

Puppetry

Sharing experiences

Group discussions

Discussing field trips

Planning for holiday presentations

Storytelling

Making announcements and introductions

Role playing

Informal conversation

Giving directions

Committee reports

Using the tape recorder

Dramatic plays

Oral reading

Talking on a topic

Answering questions

Telephone, piano, television

HOW TO TEACH LISTENING SKILLS

Recent literature is replete with techniques for teaching listening skills. Dechant (7) enumerates only some of these, and in each instance points out the implication that the exercise will have in the teaching of reading.

1. With eyes closed the child learns to make gross discriminations, for example, between a tap of a ruler, a knock on the door, a clap of the hands, or a footstep. This is the first step in developing the child's auditory discrimination skill and is necessary for proficiency in phonics.
2. The teacher demonstrates how to make a simple toy. He gives the directions orally and then asks the student to construct a similar toy. He asks some child to repeat the directions and checks the activity of each child to see that the desired directions are followed. This activity teaches the ability to follow a thought sequence, a skill needed for successful reading comprehension.
3. When teaching the discrimination between right and left, the teacher gives the directions orally, such as: "Raise your left hand"; "Put your right foot forward." This exercise, besides developing comprehension, also prepares the pupil for the left-to-right progression in reading by teaching the discrimination between left and right.
4. The pupil listens for the main idea of a paragraph, story, poem or talk. This prepares them for reading for main ideas.
5. The teacher reads a poem or short story and asks for a title for the story or a poem. This is another exercise in reading for the main idea.
6. The teacher administers tests orally. This exercise teaches following directions, comprehension, and critical listening. Critical

listening prepares the pupil for critical reading later.

7. Pupils prepare short talks on a favorite topic. Other pupils should be ready to state the organization of the talk. This exercise teaches the skill of listening and reading for organizational purposes.
8. The teacher reads a short paragraph containing a sentence or two that are not in harmony with the context. He may read materials that omit evidence, that are based on false premise, or that are not logically organized. The pupil may be asked to discriminate between fact and fiction. He should learn to detect propaganda in advertising, in newspaper accounts, and in essays, and he should learn to listen for implied meanings. Later it is hoped he will apply these critical skills in reading.
9. The pupil learns to listen for " language signals " such as: "first," "there are several ways," "furthermore," "several suggestions are " or "on the other hand." In reading, he needs to look for similar language signals.

IDEAS, ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES IN LISTENING

The following activities and exercises are compiled to offer the teacher many types of experiences in listening that can be provided as a part of a regular class schedule, group projects, and units of work. Not all children need the same degree of listening proficiency, and not all of them will reach the same levels of listening proficiency. The teacher must begin with lower levels of listening skill and gradually lead the pupil to the highest. Some of the skills that are required for improving listening are:

A. Listen for Pleasure and Appreciation

1. Talk about things they've heard on the way to school.
2. Listen to a story for pleasure.
3. Take a listening excursion and talk about what they heard. Make a list of the sounds.
4. Set up standards for listening manners and good listeners.
5. Have a discussion of sounds at home, at school, on the street, on a farm.
6. Listen to music to identify different instruments.
7. Listen to a new song and repeat the story that the song tells.
8. Listen to solve a riddle.

B. Listen to Follow Oral Directions

1. Follow directions in games such as "Simon Says."
2. Listen for word meanings. Example - Listen carefully to see if you can find the word that means frightened in this paragraph.
3. Listen to the sound of words. (Ex.) Say the word thumb softly. What does your tongue do when you say the word?
4. Listen to directions for playing a game and repeat them while seated before the game is begun.
5. Give new students directions for doing things at school, such as

putting away materials and leaving the room for a fire drill.

6. Listen to directions for making a class scrapbook.

7. Listen to first-aid directions on how to apply a tourniquet.

8. Listen carefully to take an oral message to the principal's office.

C. Listen to Find the Main Idea

1. Listen to the teacher read a story or a poem. What is the story or poem about? Is the story about a horse, about cars, or about a little old lady?

2. Ask your classmate to make up a story. You give the story a title.

3. Discuss titles for charts the class has made on the trip to Ocean World. Choose the best title for each story.

D. Listen to Remember Details

1. Find details in stories to prove answers to questions. "What kind of fruit did Father buy at the store?" "How do you know?" "Why didn't Father buy the apples?"

2. Have a class discussion and review what was said. An opening question may be, "Were you careful riding your bicycle to school?" "How were you careful?" After the discussion the teacher might say, "you told me five ways that you were careful riding your biko. Let's name them"

3. Listen for a specified number of details. The teacher may say: "This poem will tell about five animals that walk. Listen for all five of them."

E. Listening for Sequence

1. Talk about words that tell time and arrange them with proper sequence.

2. Select time words from a very short story such as: I came to school early. There was nobody in the room. First I hung up my coat. Then I looked at a book. After that I sharpened my pencil. Finally Alice came in.

3. The teachers tells a short story to the class. She makes number cards for each incident that happened. She passes out the number cards to the students. The student who has the card number 1 tells the first thing that happened. The student with card number 2 tells the second thing that happened and so on until all cards are used.

4. Listen carefully, then follow these directions in order: Write the number 6 on the board. Put a 2 below it. Put a - sign in front of the 2. Draw a horizontal line under the numbers and work the example.

F. <u>Listen to Differentiated Assignments</u> (2)

1. Before you begin to read the story aloud, give the directions: I am reading you a funny, fantastic tale by Dr. Seuss. "The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins. "Listen to the steps in the development of the story, and remember every detail you can. Pay particular attention to how Bartholomew acted as he got each new hat.

AFTER READING DIRECTIONS: Each of you is to work alone in the activity to which you are assigned. As soon as your name is called, listen carefully for your directions.

1. Group A consists of John, Jim, and George. Group A's job is to think of an adventure concerning hats that a modern Bartholomew Cubbins might have, and write that adventure into a story in pencil on theme paper. Do not wait to listen to the directions for the other groups.

2. Group B. Bill, Martin, Roy. Pretend to be newspaper reporters, either in the small town where Bartholomew lived or in a nearby city and write up a newspaper account of the hat episode for the paper they work for, either a humorous or deadly serious account. (Giften children who like to write have a "whale" of

a time with this type of assignment.)

3. Group C. Jane, Betty, and Marie. Pretend that this episode happened to a girl - Barbara Cubbins instead of Bartholomew - and design in water colors the various girls' hats that might have landed on Barbara's head. Keep your designs under cover so that we'll have dozens of different ones.

4. Group D. Janet, Mary, Helen and the rest of the girls. Rewrite the story of the 500 Hats with Barbara as the girl heroine, changing the story in any way that they like.

G. Listen for Individual Assignments

The next five suggested poems are in the reading series:

The Sounds of Language by Bill Martin, Jr.

1. Read "This is Halloween" by Dorothy Brown Thompson. (p.69) Sounds of Laughter. Assignment: Select your favorite words and expressions from the poem and use them in a creative story or poem of your own.

2. Read the rhythmic story "The House that Jack Built" (p. 64) Sounds Around the Clock. Assignment: Draw sequential pictures of the house that Jack built and each thing in the house. The first picture would be a house, the second picture the malt, the third picture the rat and so on.

3. Read "Paul Bunyan" by Arthur S. Bourinot, Sounds of a Young Hunter. Assignment: Write a short paragraph in your own words describing how Paul Bunyan looked and what he did.

4. Read "Lone Dog" by Irene Rutherford McLeod, Sounds of a Distant Drum. (P. 117). Assignment: Write a short paragraph that describes each kind of dog that is mentioned in the poem.

H. Listen to Dramatize

1. Read Let's Go Camping by Billy N. Pope. Pretend that you are making a camp fire. Pretend you are gathering wood, etc.
2. Read Long Ago in Colonial Days by Johanna Johnson. Pretend that you are the village blacksmith. Act out some of the duties of the blacksmith.
3. Read A Fox Story by Allan Sollers. Write the story in the form of a play. Choose classmates for the different parts. Present the play for another class.
4. Dramatize this short paragraph.

   "A lion paced slowly back and forth in its cage. Suddenly he stopped stock-still and listened. Then he sniffed the air. Then he gave a low growl and lay down on the floor of his cage."

   Assignment: Pretend to be the animal and act out what I have read in the exact order that I read it.

I. Listen to Analyze (2)

1. Analyzing oral reports: There are various approaches to listening to analyze oral reports:
   (a) To answer questions the speaker has prepared
   (b) To list the points the speaker made
   (c) To write a short summary of the points made
   (d) To determine what made the report interesting or what would have made it more interesting
2. Analyze what makes a joke funny. Turn to Chapter Twelve page 493 and analyze what makes the children's stories in that chapter funny:
   1. Unexpected ending

Grandmother, coming unexpectedly upon her eight year-old grandson beating with a large spoon on an overturned dishpan: "Heavens! Is all that noise necessary, Roger?"

"I'm entertaining the baby!"

"Where is the baby?"

"Oh, she's under the dishpan!".

EVALUATION

The following questions are suggested as guides to the teacher in evaluating the listening growth of students.

1. Does he enjoy listening to materials on his own level of maturity?
2. Does he listen to get information,to follow directions, to respond to questions?
3. Does he listen thoughtfully, making associations with what he hears?
4. Is he able to talk about what he hears in a rational manner?
5. Is he appreciative and considerate of the speaker?
6. Does he listen to a story or a speaker until the end?
7. Is his span of listening attention increasing?
8. Is he developing in ability to get the main idea in what he hears, to remember details, to use context clues, to follow sequence?
9. Has his reading ability increased as his listening skills have increased?
10. Is he able to take dictation of words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs?

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